IN THE CLAIMS:

A complete listing of all the claims is now presented:

Claim 1. (Cancelled).

Claim 2. (Currently Amended).

A method of claim ~~7,~~ 9, wherein the microwave irradiation is carried out at a frequency of 2450 MHz or 915 MHz.

Claim 3. (Currently Amended).

A method of claim ~~7,~~ 9, wherein the drying is carried out under a pressure ranging from 1 kPa to the atmospheric pressure.

Claim 4. (Previously Presented).

A method of claim 3, wherein the drying is carried out at a temperature from 30 to 70°C.

Claims 5 and 6. (Cancelled).

Claim 7. (Cancelled).

Claim 8. (Cancelled).

Claim 9. (New).

A method for continuous drying of books and similar paper-based material in which the material dried is exposed to microwave irradiation with a frequency ranging from 500 MHz through 10 GHz comprising the steps of:

lining the material with ceramic slabs on an upper side and a lower side and absorbing moisture when contacting the books or material during the drying process; and

wherein the ceramic slabs are provided with horizontal grooves and vertical holes;

exposing lined material to microwave irradiation in a continuous microwave drying oven under atmospheric pressure or a reduced atmospheric pressure; and

controlling the drying rate by adjusting a power supply and an advancing speed of the lined material in the oven to keep the temperature of the material in a range of 30-70°C.

Claim 10. (New).

An apparatus for continuous drying of books and similar paper-based material comprising

a microwave drying oven operating at a frequency of 915 to 2450 MHz;

ceramic slabs for lining said books or paper material on an upper side and a lower side; and absorbing moisture when contacting the books or material during the drying process; and

wherein the ceramic slabs are provided with horizontal grooves and vertical holes;

a continuous belt conveyor for receiving said lined books or material and arranged to pass through said oven; and

means for adjusting the oven power supply and the speed of the belt conveyor when passing through the microwave oven.